

River Oak Charter School Charter School Implementation Grant Proposal

Project Abstract

School Name: River Oak Charter School
CDS Code: Charter has been approved; application for CDS Code is pending.
Chartering Agency: Twin Ridges Elementary School District
CDS Code: 2966415

River Oak Charter School is requesting \$150,000 in implementation grant funds to support start-up costs to ready the River Oak Charter School to open in September of 1999. The funds will support basic start-up functions: facility improvements, equipment, books, resource materials, initial supplies, teacher time to participate in development and start-up activities and pre-service training, and a small amount for contracted services (training, resource development, technical assistance in developing and producing detailed personnel policies, other policies and procedures, assessment tools, student handbook, etc.)

River Oak Charter School is being developed to provide an innovative educational opportunity for families with children in grades kindergarten through eighth grade who reside in inland Mendocino County, California, and in the surrounding area. The River Oak Charter Petition has been approved by the Twin Ridges Elementary School District. The school is schedule to open in September of 1999. The first year enrollment is projected at 160 students. Two educational programs will be offered: a K-8 day school and a small home study program. Both programs will utilized Waldorf methods and will incorporate certain aspects of the Waldorf curriculum.

The school plans to increase enrollment incrementally over the next four years in both the day school and home study programs. (One classroom/grade level per year will be added to the day school; annual growth in the home school will be established each year based upon the program evaluation for the previous year.) The total projected enrollment for the school is 360 students by the year 2004.

The River Oak Charter School has developed a powerful educational vision which incorporates Waldorf education methods and embraces the developmental model of the unfolding child. The intent is to develop a creative, nurturing community of students, parents, teachers and community members which will work together to prepare our children for the 21st century. The school includes parent participation at all levels, including governance.

Last spring the River Oak Charter School (formerly the Ukiah Valley Charter Development Group) received a CDE Charter School Planning Grant to support the development of the school. Most of the goals and objectives of this planning grant have been successfully completed; the remainder will be completed by August of 1999.

INTRODUCTION

In the Fall of 1997, a group of about 20 Mendocino County parents and teachers began researching the possibility of developing a public school educational program in this community which would use Waldorf methods. The group found that there are successful Waldorf-methods charter schools across the nation, and that there are several viable models currently operating in California. Encouraged by their contacts with these schools, the group began to develop the River Oak Charter School.

In the Spring of 1998, the River Oak development group applied for and was granted a CDE Charter School Planning Grant to support their planning and development activities (funding started 9/98). The goals of that planning grant and the accomplishments to date are:

Goal or Product	Original Target Date	Accomplishments to Date
Expand the number of people involved in the leadership of the project.	11/1/99	Currently 46 people are participating on six development committees; most are parents.
Develop Governance Structure for Charter School	3/31/99	Charter Council & subcommittees developed.
Develop Charter Petition; secure approval of Charter by District Board of Trustees.	3/31/99	Full Charter developed; Charter approved by Board of Trustees on 3/9/99.
Develop Business/Operations Plan (goals/objectives, program, budgets, basic personnel policies, MOU with District, five-year projections/plan).	6/1/99	90% complete (see Section II-B of this proposal); plan will be completed by 5/1/99.
Identify site/facilities; analyze feasibility of site/facilities; prepare plan for site/facility upgrade/preparation; prepare site and facilities for occupancy.	8/30/99	Site identified; feasibility analyzed; site plan being developed. Implementation grant funds requested for site preparation.
Develop Student Achievement Accountability Plan.	4/31/99	In process; to be completed by 8/31/99.
Develop School Program Evaluation Plan	8/31/99	In process, to be completed by 8/31/99.
Expansion of Resources to Support Project.	12/31/99	Efforts ongoing (CDE Implementation Grant prepared through this component).

Over the past 1½ years, the River Oak Charter School development group has expanded to include about 45 members (mostly parents, some teachers, and some other interested community members), making it possible to accomplish a great deal in a relatively short period of time. As a part of the planning process, the River Oak Development Group visited and enlisted assistance from the staff of the Yuba River Charter School in Nevada County, California. The River Oak group found that the educational program at Yuba River is consistent with the vision for the River Oak Charter School, and that a great deal can be learned from Yuba River's five years of experience. These findings, combined with the collaborative and supportive attitudes of the Yuba River and Twin Ridges staff, led the River Oak Development Group to approach Twin Ridges Elementary School with a proposal to be chartered through the Twin Ridges District. **On March 9, 1999, the Board of Trustees of Twin Ridges Elementary School District approved the Charter for the River Oak Charter School.** The application to CDE for a Charter number is in process. In September of 1999, after almost two years of intense research and development activity, the River Oak Charter School will be ready to open its doors in Ukiah in Mendocino County, California.

Educational Programs. The school will offer a choice of educational programs for students:

- A full-time **Day School** for students grade kindergarten through fourth grade the first year, with the incremental addition of at least one grade level each year. As the students progress through the grades, the school will evolve into a full-time K-8 school.
- A **Home Study Program** utilizing Waldorf methods and curricula for grades Kindergarten through eighth grade.

I RIVER OAK CHARTER SCHOOL'S EDUCATIONAL VISION

A. Target Population: Community and Student Demographics

The intent of the developers of River Oak Charter School is to expand the educational choices and opportunities for families with children in grades K-8 who reside in inland Mendocino County and the surrounding area. River Oak Charter School is scheduled to open in September, 1999, with an enrollment of 160 students who reside in Mendocino County, California. Each year, over the next four years, one additional grade will be added—by 2003/2004 the school will be a fully operational K-8 school with an enrollment of 360 students.

The target area for enrollment includes several communities in inland Mendocino County—the City of Ukiah, which is the main population and business center of Mendocino County, with approximately 15,000 residents, plus the smaller communities of Calpella, Hopland, Potter Valley, Redwood Valley, Talmage, and Willits. The goal is to serve a cross section of the children/families from these communities, with the socioeconomic and ethnic mix of the communities reflected in the enrollment. This will be accomplished through extensive and ongoing outreach efforts.

The communities targeted for the River Oak Charter School are rural, and somewhat economically depressed—51.5% of the students enrolled in the local school district come from low-income families. The ethnic makeup of the local student population is 68.4% Caucasian, 22.8% Hispanic, 6.2% Native American and 2.6% other ethnic groups. A little more than 15% of the students are classified as Limited English Proficient; 16.4% of the students are receiving Special Education services; 33.3% of high school seniors meet entrance requirements for the University of California.

B. Educational Vision

1. Broad, Overall Program Goals. The overall goal of the River Oak Charter School is to positively impact student development, learning and performance by expanding the range of innovative educational approaches available to students and families in inland Mendocino to include a Waldorf-methods public Charter School. Specifically, the River Oak Charter School will implement Waldorf curricula and methods to provide an educational program in which:

- ◆ Every child can succeed, through a program in which students are educated in recognition of their own spirits and in rhythm with their own physical, mental and emotional development.
- ◆ Students emerge from the program prepared to enter adulthood with strong self-discipline, independence, a mastery of analytical and critical faculties, a reverence for the world's beauty, empathy and compassion, and interest in community and world events.
- ◆ Students succeed in response to instructional methods which emphasize the whole child, recognize that each child is an individual unfolding in a unique way, and in which the academic components are framed in an artistic, creative and imaginative context.
- ◆ Students benefit from a close community relationship between the teacher and the class, with a single teacher leading the same group of children through the grades, supplemented by other teachers leading specialty subjects.
- ◆ Students benefit from the teachings of skilled instructors who embrace the vision and mission of the school.
- ◆ A strong program of ongoing personal and professional development is provided for teachers and other staff so that they can accomplish the mission and vision of the school.

- ◆ The curriculum, program and teachers are evaluated at least annually to assure congruence with and involvement in carrying out the vision, mission, goals and objectives of the program/school.
- ◆ Students are actively and visibly supported by an involved community of parents and teachers. Parents and other family members will be encouraged to become active members of the school community. Parents will be involved in governance, the school program, events and activities, the establishment, beautification and maintenance of the school facility, linkages with the larger community and the ongoing evaluation of the school program.
- ◆ The expectations of achievement are specified for each grade; parents receive an oral assessment of their children's progress twice yearly and a written one at the end of the year.
- ◆ There are multiple measures of student performance, including State-mandated student assessment practices and procedures, and the results of the assessments are used to guide the provision of additional support to individual children and to evaluate and improve the educational program.
- ◆ Children who enter the school as "low achievers" or who have special needs are supported with individual attention and instruction designed to address their specific and unique needs. Toward this goal, strong collaborative working relationships with parents, and with the special support and education programs offered through the SELPA and the District.
- ◆ Children benefit from an educational program which reflects and responds to the diverse cultures represented in the families who enroll their children in the school. In keeping with our commitment to providing an educational program that supports the development of the human potential of each child to its fullest, the program includes teaching and activities that respect and honor the values, beliefs, traditions, and ceremonies of all of the families served by the school.

2. Philosophy/Theory/Research Base. The educational vision and philosophy of the River Oak Charter School embraces the developmental model of the unfolding child.. At the heart of the philosophy is the conviction that education is an art. Whether the subject is arithmetic, history or physics, the presentation must live—it must speak to the child's experience. To educate the whole child, the heart and will must be reached as well as the mind. The goal is to present life to children in such a way that it fills them with wonder and enthusiasm.

Although relatively new to, and considered to be innovative for the public school system in the United States, Waldorf education has been with us for over 80 years. During that period of time, most of the research has been related to the success of Waldorf graduates in higher education, in the professions and in life endeavors. However, this is only part of the picture. For example, in a recent publication a well-known member of the faculty at a leading New York University was quoted as reminiscing that:

"From time to time there would be a unique stabilizing influence in my classes—a Waldorf School graduate. They were different from the others. Without exception they were caring people, creative students, individuals of identifiable values, and students who, when they spoke, made a difference."

Although some would argue that the Waldorf methods have only been demonstrated to be effective with students who would flourish in any setting, recent experimentation with the infusion of Waldorf methods into the public school setting in the United States has been demonstrated that Waldorf methods can be effective with students who have been identified as "academically low achieving." In fact, in the Waldorf approach, individual needs are addressed and there is nothing "abnormal" about the slow learner. The entire foundation of Waldorf education is antithetical to elitism or to education for the very bright only. There are now five Waldorf Charter Schools in California. All five appear

to be flourishing; all serve a cross-section of the school district's enrollment, and most have waiting lists for enrollment. In the Sacramento City School District, a Waldorf program was initiated to improve the achievement of the large number of minority and low-income students in one area. In Yuba City, the Yuba County Office of Education is currently infusing Waldorf methods into their school for juvenile offenders, with good results. In the Twin Ridges Elementary School District, the students from the Yuba River Charter School (the Waldorf methods charter school) had the third highest scores among all of the schools in the District, despite the fact that 55% of these students come from low income families (i.e. qualify for the free and reduced price meal program.). Based upon the success of the Waldorf Charter Schools in the United States, some schools in California are now infusing the Waldorf curriculum and teaching methods into their regular elementary and high school programs.

3. Specific Educational Objectives. The educational objectives of the River Oak Charter School are stated in the school's Charter as follows: **"The River Oak Charter School is designed to support the development of competent, confident and responsible students who develop the following attributes according to each student's personal capacities:**

- ◆ **Rational thinking:** Clear logical thought and mathematical precision developed through arithmetic, geometry, biology, physical sciences, grammar and literature.
- ◆ **Language:** The ability to explore ideas with others, to work together on common projects and to articulate intentions and results, both verbally and in written form.
- ◆ **Imagination:** The imagination must be active and fruitful, for it is the basis of all creativity.
- ◆ **Intuition:** This attribute is one of the most important, yet least tangible. Students need to have opportunities to develop their capacity to respond to creative ideas.
- ◆ **Compassion:** A respect for other human beings, animals, plants, and the earth itself is an essential attribute of an educated person.
- ◆ **Volition:** The individual must develop the inner strength and capacity to translate ideas and plans into action. Qualities of determination and perseverance must be strengthened so that good intentions can become tangible.
- ◆ **Freedom:** A truly educated person must have the ability to establish personal direction and goals out of his or her own fully conscious ideas."

The Charter for the River Oak Charter School indicates that the educational program will prepare students to be able to demonstrate appropriate grade level mastery of the following:

- ◆ **Core Academic Skills.**
 - **History/Social Studies:** Students will be knowledgeable about the story of human beings. Students will understand and apply civic, historical, and geographical knowledge in order to serve as citizens in today's world of diverse cultures.
 - **Mathematics:** Students will develop abilities to reason logically and to understand and apply mathematical processes and concepts, including those within arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and other mathematical subjects which the staff and the Charter Council deem appropriate.
 - **Language Arts.** Students will be able to communicate clearly both orally and in writing. Students will demonstrate strong reading, writing, listening, speaking, and presentation skills, in multiple forms of expression (i.e. written, oral, multimedia), with communication skills appropriate to the audience. They will comprehend and critically interpret multiple forms of expression, including literature from various time periods and cultures.

- **Science.** Students will be able to think scientifically. Students will successfully utilize scientific research and inquiry methods to understand and apply the major concepts underlying various branches of science, which may include physics, chemistry, biology, ecology, astronomy and earth sciences.
- **World Language.** Students will gain a basic level of proficiency in speaking, reading, writing, and listening comprehension in at least one language in addition to their native tongue. Students will understand key aspects of the culture, both past and present, of the second language.
- ♦ **Lifelong Learning Skills and Other Core Skills.** Students will develop skills which will enable them to pursue their own path of learning throughout their adult lives, including: the ability to:
 - think critically (apply knowledge to analyze and solve problems)
 - think creatively and logically
 - value relationships and to work cooperatively with others
 - be adaptable and take personal responsibility
 - reflect on and evaluate one's own and others' learning
 - concentrate, focus and persevere
 - gather, organize and present information
 - plan, initiate, and complete a project
 - practice good study skills and habits (note-taking, library research skills, studying strategies)
 - express oneself creatively through various art forms--music, visual/studio arts, drama and movement
 - effectively use technology
 - apply knowledge of pertinent human health and physical development to everyday life.

4. What the Charter Hopes to Achieve. All of the elementary public schools are traditional public schools. The River Oak Charter School hopes to encourage learning and improve the performance of students in the local communities by providing an innovative alternative educational program in the inland area of Mendocino County—one in which parents can be fully involved in their children's education and in which every child can reach his or her full potential. The program of the River Oak Charter School is based upon the premise that learning best occurs in a stimulating, nurturing and safe environment which includes an instructional program which emphasizes the whole child and frames it's academic components within an artistic, creative and imaginative context.

The River Oak Charter School will also provide an alternative for public school teachers who want to utilize their skills in a different way. And, through dialog and collaboration with other local public schools, the River Oak Charter School hopes to serve as a stimulus at the local level for examining and improving the current system of education at the local level. On a larger scale, the River Oak Charter School hopes to contribute to a growing body of knowledge regarding: 1) how children best learn and what effects student achievement and success; 2) school reform and restructuring; 3) what can be achieved through charter school education; and 4) how Waldorf curriculum and methods may be beneficial to the public school system.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE RIVER OAK CHARTER SCHOOL

A. Educational Capacity of the School

1. Innovative Strategies and Proven Methods of Learning and Teaching. At the heart of a Waldorf-methods educational program is the conviction that education is an art. The instruction at River Oak Charter School is designed to immerse the child in a subject through story telling, writing, reading, recitation, drama, painting, drawing and movement. Teachers' storytelling and children's retelling builds comprehension of story structures. Writing is taught before reading

and is first experienced through pictures, drawing, and movement. Nature stories told and retold in the early grades evolve into more advanced scientific investigations of zoology, geology, space science, botany, chemistry, physics, physiology and anatomy. Within a structured curriculum (through teacher-initiated inquiry), main lesson books and projects of the child's own creation replace most traditional textbooks. Particular attention is paid to the rhythm of the day, the season and the year. The daily schedule has been designed to reflect the ways in which children learn at different developmental stages. Generally, the school day begins with the main lesson, which is typically a four-week long block that immerses the student in a particular subject. The subject is taught through presentations, writing, reading, recitation, drama, painting and drawing—an approach aimed at promoting and developing active listening, imagination, memory and vocabulary. Later in the day, after the main lesson, other subjects are taught, often by specialty teachers, in various subjects including Spanish, German, music, handwork, woodworking, movement and physical education.

At River Oak Charter School, each student will create an ongoing record of his/her work and the learning experience of the main lesson through the composition and illustration of a main lesson book. These become a treasured record of the child's progress and workmanship. No grades are assigned to student work. Instead, narrative evaluations gauge the progress of the whole child. However, this is not to say that assessment and evaluation of student work is not an important part of the program.

Although the Waldorf approach has had over eighty years of testing and cultivation, and has proven to be effective in countries across the globe, for the public school system in the United States, the approach is innovative. Furthermore, in recognition that every educational theory and practice warrants ongoing examination and improvement, the River Oak Charter School is committed to the ongoing evaluation and improvement of the school's educational program to positively impact the students. In fact, one of the challenges identified by Rudolf Steiner was "to recognize that each generation has its own character and that the schools must be kept relevant to changing times and circumstances."

2. Outcomes for Student Performance. A significant amount of the planning effort thus far has been devoted to the development of the River Oak Charter School curriculum and the identification of student outcomes/ competencies and standards which reflect the curriculum. The River Oak Charter includes a 37 page addendum which spells out specific objectives/outcomes for student performance for *each grade level* in reading, writing, speech, drawing and music. Work is underway to define the standards and measures in science and social studies.

In developing these student performance outcomes, the committee has drawn from the work of the Yuba River Charter School toward developing specific grade-level student competencies, standards, and rubrics. These standards and tools follow the Waldorf-recommended curricula for each grade and are based upon Rudolph Steiner's theories regarding the developmental stages of learning. For Language Arts and Mathematics, the standards have been aligned to State standards. At Yuba River, work continues on the alignment of standards for Social Studies and Science.

Due to the page limitations of this proposal, we are unable to include our Outcomes/Standards for Student Performance, or the rubrics that will be used to assess performance. In order to give the reader some idea of what has been developed, we have provided in Appendix C a very brief, one-page *summarized* sample of the student competencies which are included in the school's Charter. These competencies do not include the entire curriculum. For example, two foreign languages—one

Romance and one guttural—will be taught throughout the grades, starting in grade one. In addition, music, art work, handcrafts, gardening and other subjects are taught in all grades.

3. Student Assessment Program. The River Oak Charter Development Group has initiated work on a comprehensive Student Achievement Accountability Plan, building upon what has been accomplished by Yuba River Charter School and other Waldorf-methods charter schools. We are aware that for charter schools, the development of accurate and appropriate methods of measuring student progress is a complicated and ongoing process. We believe that the work that we have accomplished in developing a detailed grade-by-grade and subject-by-subject delineation of expected student outcomes and standards provides a basis for the development of a strong student assessment process. A portion of the requested implementation grant funds will be used to continue developing the Student Achievement Accountability Plan and the rubric/assessment tools and processes needed to implement the plan. The River Oak Charter School intends to develop a model of student assessment which is data driven, includes multiple measures, fits with what is being taught and is based upon student competencies which are aligned to the State standards. As a Charter School, we wish to be held accountable for education students better than conventional schools. The assessment process will include:

- ◆ **Demographics:** reporting of student demographics to provide a context for comparing students scores to others;
- ◆ **Program Content and Learning Environment:** an ongoing evaluation and report of the program content and learning environment;
- ◆ **Standards, Benchmarks, Rubrics and Portfolios:** The student assessment program will utilize upon multiple measures, including identified standards and benchmarks which are based upon the curriculum and related to the students' work, the use of rubrics, and the use of student portfolios. The goal is to align what is measured to what is taught.
- ◆ **Standardized Testing:** The school commits to full participation in the STAR Program, using the STAR testing as one measure for reporting student progress/outcomes.

Again, the River Oak Charter School will be drawing upon work done by Yuba River Charter School and by other charter schools. Last year, the Yuba River student competencies in Math and Language Arts were aligned to the California State Content and Performance Standards, and assessment tools (rubrics) were developed for each grade level. River Oak intends to use these competencies and assessment tools, adapting them as appropriate to our own experience. Work is continuing and Yuba River on the science and social studies standards, which will also be adopted (and probably adapted) by River Oak

4. Staff Experience and Professional Development. River Oak Charter School is currently recruiting for an Administrator and teachers who hold California credentials and who also have Waldorf training and/or experience. We are seeking staff who are committed to a “whole child” approach, the protection of childhood, and who see artistic expression as essential to the development of human beings. Thus far, we have received several applications and a number of letters of interest from individuals who possess these qualifications. Recruitment continues through newspaper ads, flyers distributed to college and university placement offices, and through conference participation (e.g. the Western Waldorf Teachers Conference and the National Charter School Conference in Colorado). Classroom teachers will, at times, step into the role of specialty teachers, teaching a variety of subjects such as foreign language, painting, drawing, handwork, physical education/games/movement and technology. Recruitment and selection processes include an analysis

of each candidate's special strengths, interests and skills. In addition to the classroom teachers, the school staff will include part-time teachers who will teach specialty classes. We have already received letters of interest from a large number of people who would like to offer their skills and experience in this area.

The Education Committee of the Charter Development Group is working with Yuba River to establish goals for ongoing professional development which are appropriate for the charter school and to the needs of the school's student enrollment. Technical assistance in the creation of the River Oak Charter School's professional development program will be provided by Twin Ridges District personnel, and by the Administrator of Yuba River Charter School. In the school's operations budget, funds have been allocated to support pre-service and in-service training, for teacher participation in training and conferences, and to support a mentoring program. The mentoring program will match teachers with strong skills in areas such as classroom management, lesson planning, communication, language arts, art, music, history, math, science, etc., with those with specific needs. After mentoring, a teacher is expected to demonstrate improvement in the mentored area. This will be evaluated through observation of the teacher and examination of student work.

B. Business and Organizational Management Capacity of the School.

1. Comprehensive Design for Effective School Functioning. With support from a CDE Charter School Planning Grant, the River Oak Charter Development Group has undertaken the development of a clear governance structure and a comprehensive Business/Operational Plan for the River Oak Charter School. The Plan includes the school's:

- ◆ **Vision and Mission Statements;**
- ◆ **Immediate and Long Term Goals** (which support the educational vision);
- ◆ **Operational Plan:** a comprehensive plan for how the school will succeed in accomplishing its goals and objectives; which includes:
 - a description of the school's governance structure, including mechanisms for ensuring that parents continue to be involved in the governance and management of the school;
 - a description of the school's management structure and expectations regarding collaboration and communication within the governance and management structures;
 - an outreach plan aimed at a diverse school enrollment; the school's staffing structure;
 - a description of the school's curriculum, including grade-by-grade measurable student outcomes;
 - a plan for assessing student progress and achievement;
 - a description of the categorical and other special programs and funding that will be utilized by the school and a plan for how each special program will be implemented and evaluated;
- **Site/Facilities Plan** which includes a description of the facility, a site plan for upgrading the site and facility prior to opening the school and over the next five years, and a plan for managing and maintaining the facility.
- **Plan for Incremental Growth** over the next five years, including staffing plans and an analysis of capital needs;
- **Budgets:** a comprehensive, balanced budget for 1999-2000, plus a five-year budget with projected revenue and expenses for four additional years;
- **MOU with the District:** a delineation of the specific relationship between the Twin Ridges Elementary School District and the Charter School related to how programs and services will be provided, attendance will be accounted for and personnel and finances will be managed;

- **Basic personnel policies**, (including job descriptions and hiring practices) and a salary schedules for each position;
- **Risk management plan** and plan for providing health coverage for school staff;
- **Other policies and procedures for the school's operation.**

The school budget and the MOU have been developed with technical assistance and support from District staff, and portions of the business plan have been reviewed by District staff. The list below provides a brief summary of some of the primary components of these documents.

2. Budget. The River Oak Charter School budget has been developed by the River Oak Development Group, with technical assistance from the staff of the Twin Ridges district office. For 1999/2000, pending the State's adoption of a new funding plan for Charter Schools, all revenues (including Revenue Limit and funding through categorical programs) have been estimated based upon the Twin Ridges revenue rates. Expenditures have been carefully detailed, and a 4% contingency fund has been established. A five year projected budget has also been developed, based upon the school's plan for incremental growth. In future years, the following process will be utilized for budget development and adoption: the original budget will be developed by the Finance Committee of the Charter Council, with assistance from the school administrator. After review by the Charter Council, the draft budget will be presented to the Twin Ridges School District. The District will provide assistance and make recommendations for changes as needed. Once a final budget has been agreed upon, it will be presented to the Twin Ridges Board of Trustees for approval and adoption.

3. Governance and Management Structure. At River Oak Charter School, the educational vision of a "community of parents and teachers" is supported by a management structure aimed at ensuring a smooth flow of communication between all groups at the school. The school administrator will be responsible for the oversight of school policies and evaluation. However, based upon the belief that parents are essential to the health of the school, parents will participate in every level of governance and strategic planning from the Charter Council to the Site Council to personnel selection and evaluation, curriculum planning, budget, safety, outreach and community relations.

The school will be governed by a ten-member Charter Council (made up of parents, teachers and community members and one representative of the Twin Ridges Elementary School District). The Charter Council has seven subcommittees—Outreach/Community Relations, Education, Home School, Finance, Personnel, Facility and Fundraising. Each subcommittee is chaired by a member of the Charter Council, and includes other parents, faculty and community members. In addition, we are establishing a Site Council, which, once the school is operating, will be expanded to include staff and new parents, and will have responsibilities similar to those of a typical public school Site Council), a Faculty Council and a Child Study Team.

Twin Ridges Elementary School District will serve as the legal and fiscal agent for the River Oak Charter School. The District and the Charter Council are working together to develop the school's operational budget. The school is purchasing a variety of technical assistance and support services from the District, including attendance services; accounting and audit; purchasing and payroll; personnel services; technical assistance with planning, program development and evaluation; planning and reporting for special programs; student assessment and testing program; insurance and risk management services; legal counsel; and other miscellaneous services. The school will be linked electronically to the District Office, so that attendance and accounting can be monitored on a daily

basis from both sites. Data entry responsibilities will be shared between the District Office and the site staff. Reports will be produced by the District Office.

The school will employ a school administrator who will work collaboratively with the Twin Ridges Board of Trustees and the Charter Council, attending Charter Council meetings on a monthly basis and conferring with the District Superintendent and District support staff on a regular basis.. It is expected that the Administrator will develop strong collaborative working relationships with a variety of groups to insure strong parent and faculty participation in the governance of the school, including the Charter Council, the Site Council, and the various subcommittees of the Charter Council. The Administrator will work with the District and the Charter Council Finance Committee to develop and monitor the school's budget and expenditures and make recommendations as needed.

For the first year, the school will be staffed with five classroom teachers (one for each grade-level), three teacher's aides (who will spend some time in each classroom and provide support and assistance to children with special needs) and several specialty teachers who will teach the specialty classes. There will also be two part-time Home School Coordinators (credentialed teachers), an office manager, a records clerk, and a custodian/grounds maintenance person. All of these staff will report directly to the school Administrator. Special Education services will be purchased from the local SELPA and the local school district. As the school develops, additional classroom teachers and support staff will be added as warranted by the expanded program and increased revenue.

4. School Development Plan/Incremental Growth. In September of 1999, the River Oak Charter School will be opened with five classes (K-4) and an estimated enrollment of 160 students. Starting in 2000/2001 and for four years thereafter, the school will add one classroom/grade level per year (adding approximately 25 students per year). In response to parent interest, the home school program will also be gradually expanded. The enrollment goal for the school is a maximum of 360 students in grades K-8.

5. Facility. The Site Committee has located an extraordinary site for the Charter School. The site, known as Yokayo Ranch, includes several buildings located on 40 acres of rural, agricultural land. The buildings once served as the large ranch house, secondary residences and other facilities for a large ranch. More recently, the facilities have been used for retreats and conferences. The property and facilities are owned by the Metta Foundation and will be leased to the River Oak Charter School. The Metta Foundation is foundation with philanthropic and humanitarian purposes, and although the lease has not been finalized, the Metta Foundation has indicated that "they would like nothing better than to have a Waldorf-methods school as a tenant." Based upon initial negotiations, it appears that the lease amount will be far below market value, based, in part, upon the compatibility of the school's mission and the purposes of the foundation, and in part upon the fact that the foundation will be able to continue to lease portions of the land for agricultural production. We are particularly excited about this facility because:

- The rural nature, beauty and serenity of the site will support the school's vision and educational program;
- The commonality of the school's vision and mission with that of the foundation opens the potential for a healthy cooperative relationship as well as financial advantages for the school;
- The site is easily accessible to students and families, in that it is only a five minutes from downtown Ukiah, the largest community and business center for Mendocino County, and only five to fifteen minutes from four other local communities with significant student populations (public transportation is available to the site);

- The site is immediately adjacent to Mendocino Community College (the college property was also part of the original Yokayo Ranch), creating opportunities for collaboration, use of college facilities, student participation in college-sponsored activities, and, as the school expands into the upper grades, the potential for student participation in college seminars and classes.
- Several of the buildings can be used for classrooms, library, staff and office space. There is room at the site to add portable classrooms, now and as the school grows. The land will allow portable classrooms to be nestled among the oak trees and natural vegetation, yet very close to the other buildings.
- The proximity to the College means that the site is accessible by a wide, paved road which is maintained by the college, that public transportation to the site by bus is available from several communities (the buses make regular runs to the college), and that utilities, high speed data lines, and other amenities are located very close to this rural site.

The Charter Council Site Committee is in the process of completing the site plan for this site. Negotiations are underway for the lease. Twin Ridges Elementary School District and the River Oak Charter Council will be parties to the lease. The lease will follow the format of other leases held by Twin Ridges, spelling out in clear detail each party's responsibilities and liabilities in relation to the site.

The site needs a number of improvements and adaptations to make it ready to house the school. Some improvements will be the responsibility of the Foundation. Specific adaptations to meet the school's needs, including compliance with ADA requirements, will be the responsibility of the school. It is estimated that approximately \$45,000 is needed to make the necessary adaptations. Also, one portable classroom needs to be added for the coming year. Funds are being requested through this proposal for CDE Implementation Grant funds to support the adaptations and preparation of the site, and to cover a down payment and the installation of one portable classroom. The costs related to the ongoing lease of the site, the payments on the portable classroom, and the maintenance of the facilities are included in the school's operating budget. Maintenance agreements will be included in the facility lease, indicating the maintenance responsibilities of the property owner and of the school. Basic maintenance will be provided by the school's custodial/maintenance person (staff). Additional work will be contracted with local specialists.

C. Collaboration and Networking Strategies.

Strong networking and collaborative working relationships make up the foundation upon which the River Oak Charter School is being developed. Collaborations developed to date include:

- ♦ **Parents, Teachers and Community Members.** Of primary importance, at the moment, are the strong, collaborative working relationship among the 45+ parents, teachers and community members who are participating in the development of the school. The steady growth of this group and the amount that has been accomplished thus far is the outcome of a focused, creative, cooperative and mutually-respectful process among a large group of people with a similar vision and goal. As the group has grown, it has become at the same time more cohesive and more diverse--both in the understanding and skills that each member brings to the group, and in the backgrounds and beliefs of the members. As outreach for student enrollment continues, it is expected that the group will become even more diverse and creative.
- ♦ **Other Charter Schools and Providers of Support to Charter Schools.** The River Oak Development Group has involved itself in the network of groups and organizations providing leadership and support for charter schools; we have developed working relationships with the

CDE Charter Schools Unit (Ting Sun, Colin Miller and Pat Chladek), CANEC (Dave Patteson and Sue Bragato), the Charter Schools Development Center (Eric Premack) and the Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy (Pamela Riley and Lance Izumi). We are known to each of these groups/individuals, and have found them to be tremendously helpful. We have participated in several Statewide trainings for charter schools, a series of seminars for Waldorf-methods Charter Schools, CDE meetings related to the proposed new funding model and special education services, the Western Waldorf Teachers Conference and will be attending the National Charter Schools Conference in Colorado this month. We have viewed all of these as opportunities for networking and have found them to be tremendously helpful. In addition, a great deal has been gained through developing collaborative working relationships with other charter schools—those currently in operation and those under development. We have learned that the sharing of creative ideas and information related to each school’s educational program, curricula, funding, staffing, approach to student assessment, State regulations and guidelines, “lessons learned”, etc., etc., has been tremendously beneficial to all. In addition, the mutual support that can be provided when things get confusing or difficult is essential. We have been particularly fortunate to develop good working relationships with the Yuba River Charter School, the Prosser Creek Charter School, the Novato Charter School and with the Woodlands Charter School Development Group which is developing another charter school in Mendocino County. Recently, we have been able to share information and documents with a new charter development group which is sponsored by one of the local Native American Tribes and with other Waldorf-methods charter initiatives. We are hopeful that these new relationships will prove to be fruitful to all groups.

- ◆ **Twin Ridges Elementary School District and Yuba River Charter School.** We have been fortunate to develop strong working relationships with the staff of the Twin Ridges Elementary School District Office and with the Director of the Yuba River Charter School. These individuals have provided an immense amount of technical assistance and support to us. We look forward to building upon these relationships during the years to come.
- ◆ **Other Local Groups and Individuals.** Part of the outreach efforts in the local communities have included public meetings (which have been publicized), articles in local newspapers and parents journal, and information sharing by word-of-mouth (perhaps the most reliable form of communication in this rural area). As the process has gathered momentum in the local communities, we have drawn the attention of a large number of parents and several groups with whom we are now working collaboratively. These include groups of parents who are home schooling their children in four rural isolated communities, several public school teachers, many other parents and several local organizations interested in issues related to children. We have had ongoing discussions the Ukiah Unified School District and with the Director of the Mendocino County SELPA. We are having discussions with a local private Waldorf school related to how we might share our creative energy and ideas. We have initiated working relationships with local arts, movement and theatre groups. Most recently, we are extremely excited about the potential of our new collaboration with the Metta Foundation regarding the use of foundation-owned land and facilities for the school. And, spurred on by our site’s close proximity to the local community college, we have recently initiated communication with the college to explore networking possibilities.

These collaborations and networks represent a beginning. We have a long way to go, but we fully intend to nurture and sustain the relationships we have established while we continue to reach out to work with others.

III. GRANT PROJECT GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

A. Identification of Needs

The implementation needs for developing the River Oak Charter School have been identified through the charter development process, led by the various committees of the Charter Development Group (which is made up of parents, teachers and community members), through the various subcommittees. The need for ongoing work on curriculum and student assessment have been identified by the Education Committee, the need for site improvements has been identified by the Site/Facilities Committee, which is in the process of preparing a site improvement plan. The need for equipment and start-up educational materials and supplies has identified by the Administrative Committee. Each of these committees has been assisted by our Lead Developer and the contracted consultant who is working with us to write our Business/Operations Plan and on ongoing resource development.

B. Justification for Support to Fulfill Identified Needs. We are requesting funds to support basic start-up expenses. The funds will be used as described in the proposal, in the chart of Goals and Tasks above, and in the attached Budget and Budget Justification. Although resource development activities are continuing, at this time, the funds available to River Oak Charter School are limited to the revenue that is available for operating the school during the first year. Although some costs have been included in that budget, and are shown in the Implementation Grant budget as match, it is not possible to cover all of the start-up costs through the year one operational revenue. Given the statements made in the CDE Request for Proposals for Charter School Implementation Funds (“National and state reports have indicated that adequate funding throughout the start-up and implementation phases of a charter school is vital to the long-term viability of the school...the United States Department of Education recognizes this need for financial assistance...”), it appears that an in-depth justification of our request for start-up funds is unnecessary. Please also see attached Budget Narrative for justification of specific expenses.

C. Specific Grant Project Goals, Objectives & Timeline. The chart on the following page depicts how the grant funds will be used to address identified needs and to fulfill the educational vision/objectives of the school, who will be responsible for the accomplishment of each task, and the projected timeframes for accomplishing each goal/task.

D Self Assessment/Monitoring of Progress. The Charter Council, working with the School Administrator and the Twin Ridges Elementary School District, will have primary responsibility for monitoring progress towards completion of all of the activities described in this proposal, and for the quality of the work performed. The chart of Goals and Tasks and Timeline presented above will provide a framework for monitoring progress. Contractors will have responsibility for the delivery of specific products in a timely way. All contracts will include a Schedule of Deliverables (products/reports to be developed by the contractors) and due dates for completion of work. Contractor payments will be based upon the timely completion of the products. All expenditures will be made in accordance with Districts purchasing policies and procedures, within the grant allocation. The School Administrator will have day-to-day responsibility for initiating purchases and monitoring contractor compliance with contracts. Records of all purchases/expenditures will be maintained. The Administrator will provide Implementation Grant Progress Reports to CDE, the Charter Council and the District.

Product/Goal	Tasks to be Accomplished	Responsible Individuals	Time-frame
Expanded School Operational Plan; Student Achievement/Accountability Plan and Parent Handbook. (The School's Operational Plan will be expanded to include additional elements.)	With support from a CDE Planning Grant, the development group for the River Oak Charter School has undertaken the creation of a comprehensive Business and Operational Plan. most of the elements of this plan will be completed by 5/1/99. Grant funds are being requested to contract with consultants to work with the Charter Council (and committees) to expand the Operational Plan to include: a framework for a Site Plan to be written by the Site Council, descriptions of the target populations for special/categorical programs, plans for the implementation and evaluation of each special program, a specific plan for the provision of Special Education services, expanded personnel policies and other policies/procedures as needed.. The Student Achievement/Accountability Plan will be expanded to include detailed assessment procedures (basic plan is drafted—needs detail) (see item 3 below). A Student/Parent Handbook will also be developed and printed (see item 3, below)..	Charter Council School Administrator Contracted Consultants	7/1/99-8/31/99
School Facility Ready for Occupancy by September, 1999.	The Charter Council and TRESA are currently negotiating a lease for the school site. The property owners (Metta Foundation) are willing to pay for basic property improvements; the Charter School is responsible for improvements to make the rooms suitable for classrooms and for retrofitting to meet ADA and school safety standards. Funds will be used to prepare plans and make the needed improvements (e.g. bathroom remodeling, fire exits, smoke alarms, a ramp and paved walkway, minor cosmetic improvements).	Charter Council Contractor Parent Volunteers	7/1/99-8/31/99
Staff trained, curricula, materials, resources & classrooms ready to start school.	Funds are being requested to support 15 days of pre-service training/preparation for the teachers and 30 hours for the specialty class leaders to participate in training and help ready the school for opening in the fall. The teachers will work with the Administrator to finalize the specific curriculum and school program for the coming year, continue work on the Student Achievement/Accountability Plan, participate in assessment training, select and order resource materials/school supplies, work on the Parent Handbook and set up the classrooms and library. Also, inexperienced teachers will be assisted and mentored by more experienced teachers during the pre-service time. (Funds have also been requested to support training and consultation during this period of time)	School Administrator Teachers Specialty Teachers Trainers Office Staff	7/1/99-9/1/99
Resource Development	Resource development is an ongoing activity. A small amount of Implementation Grant funds will be devoted to ongoing funding research and proposal preparation.	Council Contractors	on-going
Facilities expanded to accommodate growth in enrollment.	For the 2000/2001 school year one portable classroom will need to be added to support the projected growth in enrollment (a 5 th grade will be added). Funds have been allocated to partially support the cost of purchasing and installing one portable. Additional funding will be sought during 99/00 to support the remainder of the costs. If other funding is not identified, Implementation Grant funds will be used for a down-payment on the portable with a payment arrangement to be supported through the operating budget.	Charter Council School Administrator Contractors	6/1/00-9/1/00

California Public Charter Schools Grant Program Budget Sheet and Narrative -- Proposed Expenditures

Developer's Name _____
(sponsor: Twin Ridges School District)

School Name: **River Oak Charter School**
CDS Code: Application Pending

Account Codes	Description of Expenditure	Grant funds	Other funds
1000 series Cert. Salaries			
5 Teachers	Pre-service training, planning, prep. (see budget narrative): 5 teachers x 15 days/teacher x \$150 /day	\$ 11,250	
Administrator	Same as above (1 Administrator, 15 days, \$200/day)		\$ 3,000
Subtotal for 1000 Series		\$ 11,250	\$ 3,000
2000 series Class. Salaries			
Specialty Leaders & Aides	Pre-service training, planning, prep. (see budget narrative): 6 staff x 30 hours x \$15/hour	2,700	
Subtotal for 2000 Series		\$ 2,700	\$ 3,000
3000 series Emp. Benefits			
Certified	\$11,250 x 11.45%	1,288	344
Classified	\$ 2,700 x 9.4%	254	
Subtotal for 3000 Series		\$ 1,542	\$ 344
4000 series Books, supplies			
	Texts, books and resource materials	\$ 5,000	\$ 20,000
	Initial supplies for classrooms and specialty classes	3,500	2,000
	Software (attendance & accounting)	2,000	
	Initial office supplies	1,000	500
	Fire extinguishers - 8 @ \$50	400	
	Maintenance and custodial tools	700	
	Vacuum cleaners and other cleaning equipment	1,500	
Subtotal for 4000 Series		\$ 14,100	\$ 22,500

5000 series Services & other			
Contracts	Trainers—Student Assessment, Curriculum	2,000	
Contracts	Development Consultants	10,000	
Contracts	Resource Development/Grantwriting	3,000	
Inkind Consultation	Technical Assistance/Curriculum, Assessment, Special Education Programming—District and SELPA Staff 10 days @ \$200/day		\$ 2,000
In-Kind	Facility Use (Meeting Rooms)		800
Subtotal for 5000 Series		\$15,000	\$ 2,800
6000 series Capital Outlay			
Site Improvements	Contracts with contractors (including materials)— drafts person/engineer, general contractors, plumbers, electrician, paving contractors.	\$ 42,158	\$ 2,842
Portable Classroom	1 portable classroom and installation.	18,000	\$ 40,000
Computers	Computers/Monitors: office (2), staff (1), library (2); all with modems, Windows & MS Office 5 @ \$3,000.	15,000	
Printers	Printers: Office (1), staff (1) and library (1); 3 @ \$650	1,950	
Telephones	Telephone System, including telephones in each classroom, office and library, with voicemail	2,500	
Fax Machine	1 Fax Machine	500	
Student Desks/Tables	110 student desk/chairs @ \$150; kindergarten tables and chairs \$500	17,000	
Staff Furniture	Staff Desks & Chairs: 8 desks & 8 chairs @ \$350/set	2,800	
Bookshelves	10 bookshelves @ 300	2,000	1,000
File Cabinets	5 file cabinets @ \$300	1,500	
Bulletin & Black Boards	5 Black (or White) Boards and 5 Bulletin Boards for classrooms @ \$200 each	2,000	
Classroom Equipment	Other Miscellaneous Classroom Equipment 5 classrooms plus library @ \$1,000		6,000
Subtotal for 6000 Series		\$ 105,408	\$ 49,842
TOTAL		\$ 150,000	\$ 81,846

Budget Narrative:

Implementation Grant funds will be used to cover a portion of the start-up costs for River Oak Charter School. The amounts listed in the “other funds” column of the budget represent items which have been included in the first-year operating budget for the school and will be supported primary through Revenue Limit funds.

The chart of Project Goals, Tasks, and Timeframes on page 14 of this proposal provides an overview of how the requested funds will be used to support specific project goals and activities. Specific line-items in the budget are described below: **Please note that all grant funds will be used for direct costs.** Twin Ridges Elementary School District has agreed to administer the grant at no cost to the grant or the Charter School without charging an administrative fee.

Series 1000, 2000 and 3000: Salaries and Benefits: The first-year River Oak Charter School teachers will be hired in May and June of 1999. Their salaries will be based upon 180 days of service, starting August 30, 1999. We are requesting 15 additional paid days for each teacher so that this new team of teachers begin working with the Administrator (and with some of the subcommittees of the Charter Council) during July and August to contribute to the development of specific procedures and documents, participate in training related to student assessment and prepare for the opening of the school. We are also requesting funds to support the inclusion of the Specialty Class Teachers (hourly employees) in a portion of these activities. The specific tasks that will be undertaken by the teachers, specialty teachers, Charter Council members and the Administrator during this period of time are described in the chart of Project Goals, Tasks and Timeframes. The matching funds which have been included in Series 1000 and 3000 represent the salary of the Administrator, who will begin working on July 1, 1999, and will therefore be available to lead/participate in these activities.

4000 Series. Book and Supplies. \$14,100 is being request to purchase books and supplies to set up the school. This amount will be matched with \$22,500 which has been included in the year one operating budget. The needs for books, resource materials, tools and supplies has analyzed based upon information gleaned for other charter schools and from guides and publications related to starting charter schools.

5000 Series:

- a. Trainers for Student Assessment/Curriculum.** Consultants/trainers will be utilized to provide technical assistance in the continuing development of our Student Achievement/ Accountability Plan and to provide training related to student assessment procedures, and to address specific needs related to the implementation of the curriculum.
- b. Development Consultants.** Consultants will be utilized to provide support to the work of subcommittees of the Charter Council during July and August, prior to the opening of school (this will be a very intense period as we move toward the opening of the school), and to help with the writing of certain documents, including some specific components of the school’s Operations Plan, expanded personnel policies and a Parent Handbook (See chart chart of Project Goals, Tasks and Timeframes).

- c. **Resource Development.** Consultants will be utilized to help with research of potential funding sources and to develop funding proposals to support the development of the school. Of particular concern is funding to support the ongoing development of the site to allow for the incremental growth of the school over the next two years.
- d.. **Site Improvements/Preparation.** The lease agreement with the Metta Foundation is currently being negotiated. The costs for general improvements to the site will be borne by the foundation. We are requesting funds to support site improvements which are necessary to adapt the buildings for use as a school. Initial estimates indicate that at least \$45,000 will be needed to cover these costs. Funds will be used to contract with draftspeople, general contractors and specialty contracts to do this work. These estimates are based upon the involvement of volunteer labor (parents). We have many commitments from parents to help with the preparation of the site, and have identified a contractor who is willing to supervise volunteer labor.
- e. **Portable Classroom.** Based upon the facility/site analysis and plan, there appears to be enough usable space to house five classrooms (the number scheduled for the first year of operation) and other school functions. Each year thereafter, for four years, as classes are added to the school, portable classrooms will need to be purchased or leased and installed. The site plan indicates that there is enough usable flat space to support this growth. Funds are being requested to partially support the addition of one portable during the Spring of 2000. The “other funds” included in the budget for this line item are yet to be secured. If we are unable to secure the matching funds needed to purchase the portable, grant funds will be used to make a down payment on the portable, or to initiate a lease.
- f. **Furniture and Equipment.** Again, the estimates for the furniture and equipment that will be needed to set up the school have been gleaned for other charter schools and from guides and publications related to starting charter schools. This list assumes that a certain amount of used equipment will be purchased, and that some items will be donated. The development group is currently soliciting donations from furniture companies, service groups and private individuals.